

Amendments to the Specification:

The paragraph on page 5, line 1, has been amended as follows:

--Preferably, the second material comprises a solid thermal plastic polymeric material or a thermal plastic polymeric material foam or combinations thereof, and an effective amount of a filler. Suitable polymeric materials for the core layer include, without limitation, polyvinylchloride, acrylonitrile/styrene/acrylic polymeric materials, acrylonitrile/butadiene/styrene polymeric materials, and the like and mixtures or combinations thereof. Any suitable filler component may be present in any of the layers of the present composites. Such filler component or components preferably are effective to add bulk and/or strength and/or reinforcement and/or stability to the layer and/or composite. Examples of useful filler components include, without limitation, wood, mica, talc, calcium carbonate, graphite or carbon, for example, in the form of particles, such as fibers, and the like and mixtures thereof. A filler component is particularly advantageous in the core layer, while the inner layer and/or outer layer preferably and substantially free of filler component. Preferably, the filler component of the core layer material comprises a wood component such as, but not limited to, wood particles, for example, wood shavings, wood chips, wood flour and the like and mixtures thereof. This use of a wood component advantageously provides [[a]] an effective filler without unduly increasing the weight or cost of the composite.--

The paragraph beginning on page 6, line 32, has been amended as follows:

--Fig. 1a is a ~~cross sectional~~ cross-sectional view of the layered composite taken generally across line 1a-1a of Fig. 1.--

The paragraph on page 7, line 5, has been amended as follows:

--Figs. 3a and 3b are ~~cross sectional~~ cross-sectional views of the apparatus taken generally lines 3a-3a and 3b-3b of Fig. 2, respectively.--

The paragraph on page 7, line 8, has been amended as follows:

-- ~~Figs~~ Figs. 4-7 show perspective views of different cross-section shapes of composites in accordance with the present invention.--

The paragraph beginning on page 7, line 23, has been amended as follows:

--Turning now as well to Fig. 1a, a portion of the composite member 10 is shown in ~~cross sectional~~ cross-sectional view. The composite member 10 generally comprises a weatherable outer "skin" layer 12 comprising a first polymeric material, a core layer 14 circumscribed by the outer layer 12 and comprising a second polymeric material, and an inner layer 16 circumscribed by the core layer and comprising a third polymeric material. The inner layer 16 defines a hollow space 20. Preferably, at least two of the first, second and third polymeric materials have different chemical compositions as will be described in detail hereinafter.--

The paragraph on page 8, line 2, has been amended as follows:

--The composite member 10 has a length 19 along a longitudinal axis 21, and the hollow space 20 extends along substantially the

entire length 19 of the member 10. As shown in Fig. 1, the member 10 may have a rectangular ~~cross section~~ cross-section perpendicular to the longitudinal axis 21, although other ~~cross sectional~~ cross-sectional shapes are possible, depending upon the particular application of the composite member 10. In one particularly useful embodiment of the invention, the composite member 10 is in the form of a fence component, such as a rail or post for example.--

The paragraph beginning on page 8, line 31, has been amended as follows:

--Preferably, the outer layer 12 ~~is comprised of~~ comprises a relatively thin layer of solid "weatherable" polymeric material. Suitable weatherable materials for the outer layer 12 include, without limitation, thermal plastic polymeric materials, such as polyvinylchloride, acrylonitrile/styrene/acrylic ("ASA") polymeric materials and the like, and mixtures, combinations or alloys thereof. The presently useful ASA polymeric materials can be made using any suitable methodology. See, for example, Hughes U.S. Patent 5,883,191; Yu et al U.S. Patent 3,944,631; Aliberto et al. U.S. Patent 4,517,339; Ting U.S. Patent 4,731,414; Ting U.S. Patent 4,831,079; and Moringa et al. U.S. Patent 4,151,226. The disclosure of each of these patents is hereby incorporated in its entirety herein by reference. Such ASA polymeric materials may be physical blends or mixtures of styrene/acrylonitrile copolymers and acrylic polymers and copolymers; acrylonitrile/ styrene/acrylic terpolymers, interpolymers including styrene-based units, acrylonitrile-based units and acrylic-based units, and the like and mixtures and combinations thereof.--

The paragraph on page 9, line 17, has been amended as follows:

--The core layer 14 preferably ~~is comprised of~~ comprises the second polymeric material and an effective amount of a filler. The core layer 14 may include a wood component, in the form of wood particles 15, in an effective amount as a filler. The core layer 14 may comprise any suitable second polymeric material selected from, for example, without limitation, polyvinylchloride, acrylonitrile/styrene acrylic (ASA) polymeric materials, acrylonitrile/ butadiene/styrene ("ABS") polymeric materials, and mixtures, combinations and alloys thereof, and a filler component, preferably a wood component, in an amount effective as a filler in the composition. Suitable ASA/filler compositions and methods for making such compositions are described in Hughes, U.S. Patent No. 6,133,349, the disclosure of which is incorporated in its entirety herein by reference.--

The paragraph on page 11, line 8, has been amended as follows:

--Very useful results are obtained with the wood component being selected from pine wood, woods softer ~~then~~ than pine wood, such as fir wood and the like, and mixtures thereof. The wood component may also include a wood which is harder than pine wood, such as oak wood, walnut wood, hickory wood, maple wood and the like and mixtures thereof. One very useful combination is a wood component which includes a first wood at least as soft as pine wood and a second wood harder than pine wood. In this embodiment, the first wood preferably is present ~~[[as]]~~ in a major amount, that is at least 50% of the total wood present, while the relatively hard wood is present in a minor amount, that is less than 50% of the total wood present. The wood component may, and preferably does, act to reinforce the present compositions.--

The paragraph beginning on page 11, line 23, has been amended as follows:

--In a particularly useful embodiment the present invention, the wood-filled compositions forming the core layer 14 include an increased amount of lubricant relative to the amount of lubricant included in a similar composition without the filler, e.g., wood. Such increased amount of lubricant is effective in facilitating forming a substantially uniform physical blend of the components of the composition, particularly, since the filler, e.g., wood, being employed is often relatively dry and/or relatively incompatible with the copolymer components of the compositions. The amount of lubricant used preferably increases as the amount of filler particles ~~increases~~ increase. The amount of lubricant used may vary widely depending on the specific lubricant employed. The amount of lubricant employed may be in a range of about 0.1% or about 0.5% to about 2% or about 5%, by weight of the total composition.--

The paragraph on page 12, line 13, has been amended as follows:

--The substantially uniform blend formed preferably includes at least about 30% by weight, based on the total weight of the copolymers present, of the ~~uncross- linked~~ uncross-linked acrylonitrile/styrene copolymer and at least about 5% by weight, based on the total weight of the copolymers present, of the cross-linked alkyl acrylate/graft (meth)acrylate copolymer and an amount of filler component particles effective as a filler in the final composition. More preferably, the uncross-linked acrylonitrile/styrene copolymer is present in an amount in a range of about 30% to about 95% by weight based on the total weight of the copolymer

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and the cross-linked alkyl acrylate/graft (meth)acrylate copolymer is present in an amount in a range of about 5% to about 70% by weight based on the total weight of the copolymers. It is preferred that, during the forming step, substantially no polymerization occurs.--

The paragraph on page 13, line 5, has been amended as follows:

--Referring now to Fig. 2, the composite member 10 (not shown in Fig. 2) can be produced using co-extrusion techniques. Useful coextrusion assemblies, for producing a layered, extruded composite having a radially stratified annular form are disclosed in Rosenbaum U.S. Patents Nos. 4,125,585 and 4,208,175, the disclosure of both of which are incorporated herein in their entireties by reference. For example, as shown schematically, a single extruder/feedblock/pipehead assembly 40, comprising a coextrusion feedblock 42 adapted to be fed by three extruders 46a, 46b, 46c is shown. Each extruder 46a, 46b, 46c defines a separate extruder pathway 47a, 47b, and 47c, respectively. Each of the compositions (i.e. the first polymeric material, second polymeric material and third polymeric material) is introduced into a different one of the extruder pathways 47a, 47b, and 47c and extruded to yield a radially layered, substantially circular cylindrical form. This form is then reshaped to a desired axial ~~cross section~~ cross-section and cut to a desired length.--

The paragraph beginning on page 13, line 24, has been amended as follows:

--More specifically, the wood-filled core layer material, preferably along with a conventional polymeric material blowing

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agent, such as sodium bicarbonate, azodicarbonamide and the like, is fed into inlet 56a of first extruder 46a. The outer layer material and the inner layer material are fed into coextruder inlets 56b and 56c respectively. The coextrusion feedblock 42 is operable to produce a circular cylindrical form of inner layer material, core material and outer layer material at zone 58. This cylindrical form is fed directly into an inlet 60 of a pipehead forming die 62, connected to the feedblock 42, as shown. The assembly 40 produces an annular, or pipe-shaped form of the composite materials 12, 14, 16 at zone 64 which is substantially free of radial and circumferential maldistributions, as shown in ~~cross section~~ cross-section in Fig. 3a.--

The paragraph on page 14, line 16, has been amended as follows:

--For a typical application, the composite member 10 preferably has a composite wall thickness (radial thickness) in a range of about 0.06 inches to about 1.7 inches, for example, a thickness of about 0.1 inches to about 0.6 inches. The core layer 14 preferably has a thickness (~~radical~~ radial thickness) in a range of about 0.04 inches to about 0.9 inches, and the outer layer and the inner layer each, independently, preferably has a thickness (~~radical~~ radial thickness) in a range of about 0.01 inches to about 0.4 or about 0.7 inches.--

The paragraph on page 15, line 8, has been amended as follows:

--Fig. 7 shows a preferred decking plank component 110 having an elongated, generally rectangular shape and having a slightly sloping upper outer surface 111, which facilitates water run-off

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when the decking plank 110 is combined with other such planks to form a generally horizontally positioned deck. To illustrate the extent of this sloping, the composite 110 may be about 5.5 inches wide, from surface A to surface B. The wall thickness of composite 110 is about 0.3 inches. The height of composite 110 at the center line 113 is about 1.0625 inches and at surfaces A and B is about 1.00 ~~inches~~ inch. This difference results in the sloping of upper outer surface 111. A plurality of planks 110 can be secured together, for example, on wooden crossbars, to form a completed deck.--

The paragraph beginning on page 15, line 34, has been amended as follows:

--A process for manufacturing a layered composite is also provided by the present invention. The process generally comprises the steps of providing the materials described hereinabove, in flowable or extrudable form, and forming a cylindrical flow of the materials, reshaping the cylindrical flow into a desired ~~cross sectional~~ cross-sectional shape to achieve a composite having substantially uniform layers surrounding a generally central hollow space, and cutting the reshaped flow into a desired length.--